

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held in The Old School Community Centre at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 18th August 2016

Present: Cllrs. Paul Bishop, Margaret Godwin, Phil Gryce, Stephen Kimminau, Gayle Mallows, Chris Marchant, Alan Parsley, Claire Ebeling (Town Clerk),
Borough Cllr. Alaric Pugh, County Cllr. Mary Evans, Mr G Bray, 5 members of the public

- 1 Apologies for absence** – Cllrs. Loveday Perceval-Maxwell, Bob Verguson, Chris Marchant
- 2 To receive declarations of members' interests and consider requests for dispensation** – None.

Section of the meeting open to the public:

- 3 Public Participation**
A member of the public referred to a letter sent in relation to item 12 regarding the nature of the evidence of vandalism (see attachment to the minutes - correspondence).
- 4 County Councillor's Report** – Cllr. Evans presented her report (see attachment to the minutes). Cllr. Bishop asked about the origin of the proposal to blocking the right hand turn at The Bell. Cllr. Evans responded that it was the Highways consultant who attended the site visit recently who suggested that this would allow the Church Street footpath to be widened. Cllr. Godwin added that she understood that this would effectively result in the centre of Clare becoming one-way. Cllr. Evans confirmed that was her understanding and that a detailed assessment would be made if the Town Council confirmed they wish for the County Council to pursue this proposal.
- 5 Borough Councillor's Report** – Cllr. Pugh presented his report (see attachment to the minutes). The matter of the poor control of Japanese Knotweed at the ex-Martins funeral director's site was discussed. There is some uncertainty as to where the responsibility lies to take action against the owner of the land. The Clerk has been advised by the Environment Agency that the Anti-Social Crime & Policing Act 2014 gives district councils the power to issue a notice to place restrictions on a person's behaviour and, if necessary, force them to take steps to rectify the behaviour that is having a detrimental effect on the community (i.e. by not controlling Japanese knotweed). St Edmundsbury Borough Council responded that Japanese Knotweed is not their responsibility. It was agreed that the Clerk will write again to the landowner (this time by recorded delivery), following this, further investigation will be carried out if necessary.
The Clerk reminded Cllr. Pugh that the Town Council awaits confirmation of the transfer of responsibility for the attenuation ponds and the green spaces on the new estate at Land East of the Granary (Maxim Way).
Cllr. Parsley thanked Cllr. Pugh for his assistance with the play area on the Westfield estate which has been updated and is being well used. He added that a meeting is planned for September to discuss further developments on the site.
Cllr. Bishop referred to the planning officer report being revised on the application for the Antiques Centre. Cllr. Pugh responded that he had hoped a positive resolution on parking might have been possible but it has been confirmed that it will not, therefore a new date for the committee meeting has been set for 1st September. He added that he intends to support the objection of the Country Highways department.

End of public section of meeting

- 12** Cllr. Bishop referred to a letter received from Geoffrey Bray regarding vandalism in Clare Castle Country Park and invited Mr Bray to speak to the item. Mr Bray explained the concern that if working in isolation to remove anti-social behaviour from the park, this could potentially occur somewhere else in the town. He therefore suggested that the Town Council work with the Country Park Trust and other interested parties to improve such issues across Clare.
Cllr. Pugh requested to speak and stated that he would like to see CCTV at both routes into the Country Park so that cars entering and leaving would be captured on film. He recommended

contacting Tim Passmore, Police & Crime Commissioner, for information about CCTV.

Mr Bray reported that police advice in the past had been that CCTV was not recommended due to the incompatibility of cost and benefit. It was suggested that improved lighting would be a better solution, however since being installed, improved lighting appears to have made the Country Park *more* attractive to those carrying out the vandalism.

Cllr. Bishop responded that the Town Council would be keen to be involved in bringing together a group to include the Park Trustees, Town Councillors and the police. He added that a question about CCTV is included in the soon-to-be circulated community survey. It is hoped that parishioner responses will enable the Town Council to judge whether CCTV in the town centre should be investigated further.

Cllr. Kimminau reported that for security purposes, the sites for fitting Vehicle Activated Signs are in view of properties rather than on an unoccupied stretch of road.

6 To approve minutes of previous meeting held on 21st July 2016

The minutes were approved unanimously.

7 To receive an update on the actions from the previous meetings

The Clerk reported that all actions were complete.

8 To receive the Clerk's Report for decision and information – See attachment to the minutes.

9 Finance

i) To receive the RFO's report and approve the monthly accounts and cashflow: The RFO presented her report (see attachment to the minutes) and monthly accounts and cash flow report a proposed by Cllr Godwin and approved unanimously.

ii) To consider applications for Section 137 grant funding.

The RFO reported that a request for a donation had been received from the Kernos Centre, which provides counselling support to local people. The last donation made by the Town Council to this organisation was 13 months ago. Cllr. Godwin proposed a donation of £200. Approved unanimously.

To consider staff salary increases.

iii) Cllr. Bishop referred to a previously circulated report (see attachment to the minutes) and proposed the approval of a 1% increase in pay levels for all staff from 1 October 2016 . He also proposed the recommendation to realign the annual pay review so that the next review will be 1st April 2018.

Both proposals approved unanimously.

The RFO will write to the employees to notify them of this decision.

RFO

RFO

10 To consider items of correspondence for decision/response

The Clerk presented the correspondence report - see attachment to the minutes.

11 Planning

To agree the Town Council response to the planning authority on:

i) DC/16/1411/FUL – Eastfields Farm Barn, Cavendish Road – Change of use of office (B1) to Physiotherapy rehabilitation centre (D1).

Cllr. Gryce proposed that the Town Council response to the planning authority be to support the application. Agreed unanimously.

ii) DC/16/1586/TCA – Clare Castle Country Park – Fell all trees within 4 metres of the south bank of the moat.

Cllr. Gryce proposed that the Town Council response to the planning authority be to support the application. Agreed unanimously.

iii) DC/16/1587/FUL & DC/16/1588/ADV – 1-2 Church Street - Addition of outside seating & Application for Advertisement Consent - New lettering painted over 4no. non-illuminated fascia signs including painting of external walls with Quartz White.

Cllr. Gryce asked Councillors to consider whether the pavement is too narrow, Cllr. Godwin suggested considering Policy DM38 and DM39 – whether the seating would adversely affect public

amenity and safety. There was some discussion before Cllr. Gryce proposed that the Town Council response to the planning authority on both applications be to support the application. Agreed unanimously.

iv) DC/15/1570/HH – Maples, Erbury Place – Detached garage

Cllr. Godwin suggested that Councillors consider Policy DM1. Cllr. Gryce proposed that the Town Council response to the planning authority on both applications be to support the application. Agreed unanimously.

v) To consider and agree a response to the Officer's report on application DC/16/0103 for presentation at the future DC meeting

Cllr. Bishop explained the reason for the agenda item was that the Planning Authority Development Committee Meeting scheduled to hear this application had been postponed pending a revised officer report which members of the Town Council Planning Working Party had seen and wished to raise some new items to be taken into account at the rescheduled Development Committee Meeting (see attachment to the minutes). Cllr. Bishop proposed that the draft response be approved and send to the planning authority. Agreed unanimously.

13 To receive an update on developments regarding improving tourism in Clare.

Cllr. Gryce reported that the Tourism Group is making some progress and there will be a meeting of the original stakeholders on 22nd September. Cllr. Evans and Pugh will be invited.

Cllr. Bishop

14 To consider a response to the proposal to prohibit vehicles turning right at The Bell into Church Street.

It was agreed not to make a decision until further information is received from SCC Highways Department.

15 To receive an update on the survey and 4 Year Plan.

Cllr. Mallows reported that a draft survey has been circulated and urged all Councillors to review and respond to her by 26th August for printing and delivery by the end of September and collection by Councillors in early October. Cllr. Kimminau stated that the survey is very comprehensive and had some concern that it may be too onerous for people to complete and suggested a reduction in the number of pages.

Cllr. Bishop proposed that areas of the town be allocated to each Councillor to collect the surveys. Cllr. Perceval-Maxwell to send the allocation area to each Councillor.

16 To receive a proposal to cancel the current website contract with effect from 1 October 2016.

Cllr. Gryce reported that the new Clare website will be live on 29th August and the following week the Clerk and RFO emails will transfer to the new addresses and will have been moved entirely by the end of October. He proposed that the current website and email hosting via clare-uk.com be cancelled with effect from 1 October 2016. Agreed unanimously.

17 To receive a proposal to agree the Town Council response to the devolution consultation.

Cllr. Bishop proposed that a letter be sent in response to the consultation rather than to simply complete the questionnaire due to the overly prescriptive nature of the options for responses in the questionnaire. He proposed that a letter be written to clarify that Clare Town Council is not opposed to devolution but to a regional Mayor and a combined authority for Norfolk and Suffolk and proposed that the previously circulated draft be sent and copied to local parish councils, the County and Borough Councillors sent (see attachment to the minutes). Agreed unanimously.

18 To receive items for decisions required by Town Council Committees and Working Parties.

None.

19 To receive agenda items for next meeting

(i) To receive an update on developments regarding improving tourism in Clare

(ii) To receive an update on the survey and 4 Year Plan

(iii) To approve the 2016/17 Precept timetable

(iv) To receive a proposal to identify and compile details of ownership of retail premises in Clare.

19 To confirm the date of the next meeting as Thursday 20th October 2016
Confirmed.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Attachment to Minutes, Item 4, County Councillor's Report

This is obviously a quieter time of year – I have been on holiday for two weeks and SCC has no formal committee meetings so my report is briefer than usual

HIGHWAYS

In response to the question at last month's meeting about the robustness of the Chilton Brook bridge on Cavendish Road I contacted Stuart Heald the SCC Structures Manager.
I have given a full report to both the clerk and the member of the public who asked the question, but in short: The bridge was reconstructed in 1984. It underwent its most recent Principal Inspection in February 2015 and a structural review concluded that there was no reason to structurally assess the bridge and the design capacity remained valid.

The bridge is however due for its next General Inspection next month.

There is currently no weight restriction on the bridge but this will be reviewed following the next Principal Inspection scheduled for 2021/22.

Highways is moving to what is described as an asset management approach – trying to keep the roads in the best condition with the funds available so sometimes spending money on preventative work to stop roads deteriorating badly. This move is because Government is switching the emphasis of its grants towards proactive rather than reactive work. We are asking communities for feedback on this. The period of community engagement closes on Thursday 15 September 2016. To take part in this community engagement, please visit. Again do please take the time to comment.

Re the proposal about blocking the right hand turn at The Bell, which you are to discuss tonight. I apologise I have not got an update from highways for you on their thinking about this suggestion.

VAS

We need to redraft the data template for collating and sharing speed data with the police. I was unaware that the template highlighted the percentage of vehicles over 45mph – which in most cases is not a significant proportion of the traffic. The figure we need to present to the police to trigger deployment of the speed camera van is that at least 20per cent of vehicles are travelling at 35mph+

I have asked the parish councillors who drew up the template to rework it.

I have had a very disappointing and frankly frustrating exchange of emails with the officer in charge of the deployment of the speed camera vehicle because she said the police would need to come and do their own research before deploying rather than use our data, which I regard as a waste of their time and our effort.

In a further exchange with her superior, I was told that the prioritisation for deployment is - speeding issues/complaints that are raised by the public via –

- Mr Passmore's office
- Chief Constable Wilson's office
- Community Speedwatch groups
- Local policing teams
- Local Parish Councils

I took this news badly – and pointed out it is contrary to the agreement we made last November that speed data from the VAS would trigger deployment if it showed 20% or more of the traffic was exceeding the police intervention rates. I also suggested that if they preferred I would happily supply local residents and councillors with the email addresses of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable so that they could be deployed in response to anecdotal complaints rather than hard, evidence from VAS. I will get this resolved – I have talked to the PCC's office but it is disappointing that what is meant to be an effective joint community effort to tackle a very real problem is being delayed by bureaucracy.

Tourism

I realise this is on the agenda for this evening and have two points to share

1. We have just enjoyed a holiday in Orford where a significant visitor attraction is Orford Castle built by Henry II to curb the ambitions of the Bigods of Framlingham Castle, 14 miles away. It occurred to me there are very few castles in Suffolk – Orford, Framlingham, Bungay, Eye and Clare.
Could we link up with the county's other castle communities for some joint promotion? At the very least, could we not ask the other castle towns to take some of our leaflets so that people who enjoy a trip to one of castles can find out about the others?
2. I spent time this week with a near neighbour who has had great success this summer letting her annexe via Airbnb mostly people who come here for the weekend. She has no leaflets or printed info to give her visitors about Clare. I can rectify that but it made me wonder how is the tourism group targeting the dissemination of tourist leaflets etc in the villages around Clare?

County Wide

Education – today's A level results

Provisional figures show that Suffolk pupils have once again performed well with the overall pass-rate for A-levels continuing to rise.

Almost 3000 pupils were entered in Suffolk, although yet to be verified the figures show that 98.5% of pupils achieved A*- E, in comparison to 98% in 2015. 76% of pupils achieved A*- C, in comparison to 77% in 2015.

Early indications show that our academic average points per entry is 32.9, our Applied General (subjects previously referred to as vocational) average points per entry is 35.7. Whilst we cannot directly compare this to previous results due to the Department of Education's new point score system, our calculations show this as being above the national figure and an improvement on last year.

Congratulations to all our young people who have done so well – and of course to their teachers.

Devolution Deal announced for East Anglia

I know you are discussing this issue this evening. You are well aware of my views. This week, in my role chairing the SCC Scrutiny Committee, I met with senior officers to scope the scrutiny session we will be holding in late September on devolution. I am inviting the chairs of all the district/borough scrutiny committees to join us and take part as well as the Leader of Norfolk County Council.

I was delighted this week to be invited by the Centre for Public Scrutiny to sit on a reference group that is being set up to support a project they are undertaking this autumn looking at devolution and governance. I know I have talked to you with some vehemence about the prospect of an elected mayor and my other major concern is how the proposed new combined authority would be effectively and properly scrutinised. I do realise I am becoming somewhat scrutiny obsessed but that is only because I understand the importance of accountability and transparency.

The Suffolk Fit Villages team – which brings sport and exercise activities to rural areas is looking to extend its work into this area. They currently promote a wide range of classes – pilates, Zumba etc. My locality grant can be used to underwrite an initial course. For more info - www.suffolksport.com/fitvillages

Mary Evans, Clare Division, Suffolk County Council

Attachment to Minutes, Item 5, Borough Councillor's Report

This is a monthly report on activities conducted by Alaric Pugh, Borough Councillor for Clare, on behalf of the whole community, following the election on 7th May 2015. I am delighted to have been elected to represent Clare again and will work hard to uphold the interests of the town at St Edmundsbury Borough Council. I am Portfolio Holder for Planning and Growth. The committees I sit on are: Cabinet and Development Control. I Chair the Sustainable Development Working Party and am Vice Chair of the Growth Steering Group and The One Haverhill Partnership where I lead on the Haverhill town Centre Masterplan. I attend Dedham and Stour Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Project Board Meetings. **My chief role is to ensure Clare and its residents have a voice at the Borough Council table.** I expect to be in attendance at Town Council meetings and will be happy to answer any questions from councillors or residents after my report. I have run a surgery between 9.30 and 10.00 am on the first Saturday of the month for residents whose questions cannot be addressed at the Town Council Meeting - this is suspended but I can be contacted at other times: my mobile phone number is: 07930460899 and email alaric.pugh@stedsbcc.gov.uk

1. Training undertaken since last report - planning
2. Civic/business events - presentations to a company
3. Meetings attended (excluding Majority Group meetings)
 - Development Control
 - Ec Dev Briefings
 - Planning briefings and other ad hoc development planning meetings
 - Delegation Panel
4. Forthcoming meetings before next TC meeting
 - Dev Control
 - Cabinet
5. Voting record - recent items with direct significance to Clare community:
 - I represented the TC objection at Del Panel but ultimately supported the Del Panel decision not to call in the cooling units at the Post Office.
6. Current Clare issues involvement/resident requests to take forward:
 - various planning items including Clare Antiques
 - Locality budget items
 - Land East of the Granary/Westfield - development of an amenity project - meeting expected September.
 - West Suffolk Tourism

8. NEWS:

This is traditionally a quite month at the Council.

- I am anticipating the Planning Officer responsible for the Clare Antiques application calling a local meeting to try to resolve the outstanding questions with regards to this development.

Previously:

The latest of these is the urgent need to replace some of the road side place names in Clare e.g. Ashen Road sign is barely readable. Officers tell me they have opened an action file and if we can supply further sign replacement photos and details they will renew them. I am looking forward to hearing news of progress on this item.

Other items:

And I am still trying to help us all to get to the bottom of the Japanese Knotweed problem in Stoke Road

Attachment to Minutes, Item 8, Clerk's Report

Information:

I have received a number of reports of youths causing disturbance, leaving litter and (allegedly) causing criminal damage to cars. As we no longer have a regular police presence in Clare, I am at a loss as to what to say to parishioners. I contacted Matt Gilbert, who is in charge of the SNT for Haverhill and the villages (see his response in correspondence). We are unaware of any police presence in Clare because they no longer provide a report or attend the meetings. There is a risk that increased awareness of a lack of police presence will lead to more incidents and this is the view of the members of the public who have contacted me in recent weeks.

St Edmundsbury Borough Council Planning decisions

DC/16/1022/FUL & 1023/LB – Commerce House – Retention of 3no compressor units in the rear garden. Application approved.

DC/16/0847/HH – Pilgrims Rest, Poslingford Corner - (i) two storey side extension and (ii) porch. Application approved.

DC/16/ 1019/FUL & 1020/LB - The Gig House Chilton Street - (i) conversion of existing cottages and brick stable to single storey cottage including partial demolition of existing building (ii) single storey extension to existing building to form southern wing and (iii) detached cart shed - resubmission of DC/15/1678/FUL. Application approved.

DC/16/1208/TCA – The Old Bear & Crown – Fell 1No. Whitebeam – No objections.

DC/16/0764/LB – Lion House - Internal alterations and repairs including - (i) installation of 2no windows, (ii) creation of new doorway (iii) demolition of internal wall and (iv) creation of internal walls. Application approved.

DC/16/1270/HH - 28 Bridewell Street - Retention of single-storey rear extension forming garden storage area. Application approved.

Attachment to Minutes, Item 9i, RFO's Report

S.106 Money has been received for the VAS equipment £3,450
£100k fixed term investment matured 4 th August 2016, giving interest of £163.84.
£100k has been reinvested £50k for 3 months at 0.56% and £50k for 6 months at 0.6%.
S.137 - see email from Sarah Bevan and my reply, as yet I have not received a response to my email

Attachment to Minutes, Item 9iii, Staff salary review

Proposal:

1. to Review the salaries of the five staff employed by Clare Town Council, Town Clerk, RFO, 2 Street Wardens and the Cemetery Management Officer

2. To move salary review date to April for budgeting purposes and to bring it in line with Public Sector pay reviews. Therefore propose a 1% increase from October 2016 to be reviewed at April 2018.

The last increase was in October 2015 when it was agreed to give a 1% increase in line with Public Sector pay award.

Previous Years Salary Cost

Year Salary Costs Against a budget of

2014/15 £34,373 £38,094

2015/16 £35,280 £39,294

Current Year 2016/17

For the current year 2016/17 we are working to a budget of £40,336 which did include a provision for Workplace Pensions commencing in August 2016.

Next Year 2017/18

Public Sector increases again stand at 1% and therefore taking this into consideration, together with additional cost of Workplace Pension for 2017/18 we would need to budget £41,465 if we approve the proposed a 1% Increase.

NB: Staff costs attributed to CMO and Cemetery Admin are financed from Cemetery Income.

Attachment to Minutes, Item 10, Correspondence

Items for action (all circulated to Town Councillors)

Clare Baptist Church	Request to sing carols and give out mince pies on Market Hill on Saturday 3 rd December. Action: Approved unanimously.
Linda McPhee	Letter re Geoffrey Bray Action: Cllr. Bishop to draft a response for circulation to councillors.
Clare Community Association	Request to hold a pop-up stall on Market Hill on Saturday 19 th and 26 th November to publicise the Christmas Fair and the Church drawer. Action: Approved unanimously.
Sgt Matt Gilbert	Response to email re policing in Clare. Action: Cllr. Bishop to draft a response for circulation to councillors.
Age Concern	Cllr. Gryce reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau (Bury St Edmunds) are submitting a bid to Suffolk Foundation for a grant to create a pilot project with Clare (and another smaller parish council, as yet unnamed) to assist the older citizens of Clare in applying for cheaper utility rates. CLASP have agreed to serve as first point of contact for the project. Action: Approved unanimously.

Items for noting (copies available from the Clerk on request)

Clare Castle Country Park	Financial Report for the first quarter of 2016/2017 (3 months ending 30 th June 2016).
S Kimminau	Letter re Geoffrey Bray.
Mary Evans, SCC	Response to request for information regarding the bridge over Chilton Brook.
Highways England	Acknowledgement of CTC response to Highways England - Road Investment Strategy Consultation.
Resident in Maxim Lane	Concerns re youths and damage to property
St Edmundsbury Borough Council	Notification of result of Community Governance Review

**Attachment to Minutes, Item 11(v),
Clare Town Council's Response to the Case Officer's Report on DC/16/0103/FUL – Clare
Antiques Centre, Malting Lane, Clare**

Site details p2

'4. The site is bounded to the south and west by dwellings and attached to the north flank of the building is a new build two-storey dwelling granted permission in 2013.'

Comment: the officer is incorrect. This was not a new build but a conversion of a 1920's annex to the Antiques Centre.

Principle of Development p5

'22..... The site is not within the town centre and neither is the site within any designated local centre so the provisions of Policy DM35 do not apply.'

Comment: this is a key issue, also evoked in 27 and 29. The term 'town centre' and its variants 'defined town centre' and 'designated local centre' are used interchangeably. The Town Council disputes the accuracy of the presumed definition and therefore the officer's dismissal of the provisions of Policy DM35 (and DM36 as well). This issue is discussed in detail below.

Loss of Antique Centre (A1 Retail use) p6

'26. The building is located outside the centre of the town where the adjoining uses are residential. Although the building is prominent within the street scene, it is not situated within a shopping/commercial environment.'

Comment: this compounds the same inaccuracy mentioned above.

'26.....The Town Council has suggested that the Antiques Centre attracts 100,000 visitors Clare every year, and is the biggest business in the town.'

Comment: the Town Council is simply quoting the applicant himself in a Suffolk Free Press Article dated 9th February 2013. In the same article the applicant correctly states that the Antiques Warehouse is the largest business in Clare and brings "vibrancy" to the town. (See attached copy of the article Appendix 01; online link: <http://www.suffolkfreepress.co.uk/news/community/community-news/vibrant-antiquesbusiness-not-set-to-close-say-owners-1-4761932>)

'26.....The business is not considered to be a long-term viable option.'

This is an unproven assertion. The business has not been put on the market as a going concern. The Town Council recently approved a change of use to a residence for a business that had been on the market for commercial purposes after it had been on sale for more than 18 months.

'27.....Its contribution towards to vitality of the town centre is therefore limited.'

Comment: this is another unproven assertion. The Town Council understands that the footfall of visitors to the Antiques Centre is significant. Comments from shop-keepers and business owners in the town support this view: 'a death knell', 'a body blow'. The majority of visitors to the Antiques Centre Only either pass on into the town or return to it. Even a minimal 5% fall in footfall may be enough to put some businesses in peril.

'28. It is also noted that the A1 retail use of the ground floor, namely the existing Antique Shop, will be retained.'

Comment: this will constitute less than 10% of the whole building as the latest plan now incorporates a refuse bin area in the same area as well as an access staircase. It will be insignificant to the economic viability of the town.

Access/Parking p8

'37.....No access or dedicated parking is proposed. The applicants justify this on the basis that due to the units being mainly one and two bed flats close to town centre amenities, car usage is not expected to be high.'

Comment: this expectation of the applicant is completely unfounded. There is limited employment in Clare. The public transport service is limited, linked directly only to Sudbury and Haverhill, closing by 6 pm and unavailable on Sunday. Employees further afield must use private vehicles.

'42.....This conclusion was also reached in 1992 by an Inspector dealing with the planning appeal for the conversion of the building to an Antique Centre where he stated that it is had been recognised for over 20 years that the car park provided parking for the town generally and was recognised as such in the local plan at the time.'

Comment: the officer makes irrelevant use of a 1992 document (when Suffolk County Council owned the Park) and fails to take account of the overwhelming additional demand for on and off-street parking due to increased town centre and large scale housing developments in Clare over the past 25 years.

'43.....'the likely reduced level of car use'

Comment: what is the evidence for this presumption? Without an improved public transport offer or an increase in local employment, high use of private transport within a rural community will be sustained. This issue is discussed in detail below.

Conclusion p10

'47..... The loss of the majority of the retail use of the building would not have a significant detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the town.'

Comment: the Town Council utterly rejects this conclusion.

'49. When assessed against the development plan as a whole, including having due regard to the NPPF, it is considered that the adverse impacts of the development do not outweigh the benefits and that the proposal therefore represents sustainable development.'

Comment: Clare Town Council is proud to support sustainable development. We are currently working with borough planning officers and developers on 64 proposed new homes which, when added to the 60 already nearing completion, the 11 new, affordable homes sponsored by the Town Council and the additional planning applications for 15 new homes approved this year to date, means we will already have exceeded our Vision 2031 allocation by over 20%.

ALL of these homes have designated parking. This application has none.

We believe the adverse impacts of the development do outweigh the benefits.

Statement on key issues

We remind the officer of the significant wording in various policies, which we do not believe support this application.

□ Policy DM1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development: "...secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area."

□ Core Strategy 4: Point 7.15 "Growth in Clare should consolidate and enhance local community services and facilities, particularly local shops and businesses....."

□ Core Strategy 9: Policies in Development Plan Documents will set criteria for the continued encouragement of sustainable employment development and tourism development opportunities (including conversion of suitable buildings) in villages and rural areas.

The defined town centre

The Town Council believes that the officer has incorrectly identified the defined town centre and therefore must consider DM35 and DM36 in his recommendation. We believe the local Plan Map needs to be refined; a more exact model must be drawn up as this may affect future planning issues and investment opportunities.

There is a lack of clarity between the use of the terms 'key service centre' and 'defined town centre'. We are classed as the former as we have other services and facilities within the parish: schools, garages, leisure activities, other businesses and trades, some of which lie outside the centre, however defined.

Rural Vision 2031 Clare pp 62-65 Map on p62 Appendix 02

Note 1: the Surgery/Health Centre in Nethergate Street and the Community Centre in Callis Street (though present in 2010) are omitted from this map, but the Antiques Centre and the public houses in Callis Street are included.

Note 2: a picture of Maltings Lane with the Antiques Centre and the nearest shop (Trinders) clearly visible is prominently displayed on p65, presumably as a visual commentary on the quality of the townscape.

Local Plan Policies Map February 2015 Clare - Inset 15 Appendix 03

The map is arbitrary and imprecise when it comes to the 'defined town centre' in contrast with the precise housing settlement, recreational space and conservation boundaries. The blue dots include gardens and residential areas.

The map excludes locations that in Rural Vision 2031 do constitute part of the town centre: a shop, two doctors' surgeries, a community centre, a library and two public houses. The parish church is excluded and two other places of worship (Baptist, URC) which local people would say are part of the town centre. It excludes the Antiques Centre and its café (a major commercial premises) when the map in Rural Vision 2031 includes it.

The emphasis on a 'defined town centre' ignores the nature of a local service centre that shifts and changes over history as demand alters. DM 35 makes note 'of a rich and diverse number of uses which together give the centres their own local distinctiveness' (p43 7.3).

Unless there is a document that exactly describes the boundary (street by street, house numbers etc), the map is only an arbitrary indicator, unlike the boundaries of the Conservation area, Housing Settlement or the parish itself. We believe that DM35 and DM36 do apply to Maltings Lane and the Antiques Centre, as well as other parts of the town.

DM 36 In local centres the loss or change of use of shops or services (or premises last used for such purposes) will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the use is no longer viable No such proof has been offered.

A consequence of this is that we support the view of the Clare Society that a partial development of housing on the top floor of the Antique Centre would be more acceptable than losing virtually all the commercial activity. Notes to DM35 7.7 The use of upper floors can provide accommodation for people who want to live in a town centre but not necessarily at ground floor level. Furthermore, the occupation of upper floors can significantly improve the vitality of a town centre through increasing diversity.

Parking in Clare

Suffolk County Council Highways has objected to the application based on the lack of long term parking arrangements. Vision 2031 acknowledges the serious lack of parking in Clare. The Core Strategy for Rural Areas, Clare 7.13 states 'The popularity of the settlement has created problems with lack of parking ...' Clare Castle Country Park is outside the Housing Settlement Boundary and wholly within a Recreational Open Space as defined by the St Edmundsbury Local Plan map. The acceptance of Recreational Open Space as designated parking in a Planning Application will set a precedent for such use of all Recreational Open Spaces within the Borough.

Clare Castle Country Park is administered by a Charitable Trust which has sole responsibility for all aspects of management. The Charities Commission may not accept a decision which essentially supports a private, commercial development unconnected to the Trust.

As freeholder of Clare Castle Country Park, Clare Town Council is obliged to receive advice and evidence from the managing Trust, as well as other interested parties. This may include a request to vary the lease in relation to the car park, restoring the historical restriction on overnight parking. Clare Town Council has taken no view on this issue, but is obliged to stand by its commitment that none of the parish precept will be used to maintain the park.

Two further concerns

The Officer has not addressed the Highways Safety issue of the single front door for 6 proposed properties opening directly onto the carriageway. With no pavement and the entrance less than a metre from the double yellow lines, residents and visitors will exit the building directly into oncoming traffic.

We must question a safe emergency escape route from all properties, given that all rear windows are to be non-opening.

Clare Town Council will ask for these concerns to be minuted and a record of the Officers' and Development Control panel answer to be made available for future reference.

Conclusion

A complete lack of long-term, designated parking would add pressure to an acknowledged, existing parking shortfall in the area. Together with the very severe impact of losing considerable numbers of visitors and the economic contribution they make to the viability of our town as a Key Service Centre means that Clare Town Council is of the opinion that the adverse impacts of granting permission for this development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefit.

Clare Town Council believes the Delegation Panel should defer making a decision on this planning permission until the two issues of the defined town centre and of parking are properly resolved.
Response written by members of Clare Town Council Planning working party:

Paul Bishop, CTC Chair
Margaret Godwin
Phil Gryce
29 August 2016

DRAFT

Dear Sirs

Suffolk & Norfolk Devolution Public Consultation

We strongly support the principle of devolution that gives local people a say in major schemes that will affect them. New powers and responsibilities delegated downwards is a sound concept and will inspire greater democratic involvement.

However, we find the concept of a mayor and a combined authority for Norfolk and Suffolk unacceptable on several grounds:

1. The word 'mayor' is applied to towns and cities; it is **not just that a mayor is not suitable for a region but that this proposal is creating an artificial region in which we already know some districts of Norfolk are reluctant to be included.**
2. An extra layer of local government will be added, in spite of remarks that this is not the case. We agree that decisions will be taken locally and not at Whitehall, but there will still have to be a scrutiny body at Whitehall. Necessarily there will be a supporting office for the mayor and the joint body, with associated staffing and expenditure.
3. A directly elected mayor, just like the elected Police Commissioner, will attract limited electoral interest. The person will have a deciding, even overriding, vote on policy that may not reflect key areas of the population, particularly between different political blocs representing town & cities and rural areas.
4. While we agree that every member of the Combined Authority should have a vote, there is uncertainty about the number of members who will be able to progress proposals; we question the concept that a simple majority is adequate when some issues may divide the community near equally.
5. We are strongly committed to scrutiny, review and audit of any such measures.
6. The whole scheme over its 25 year period will be subject to changes of government and financial pressures. It is experimental and does not address long-term responsibilities or accountability.

We are unhappy with the terms of the consultation. No alternative to a mayor is offered. We have to comment on priorities for the combined authority, without being able to suggest if there is an alternative way of decision-making:

- The use of local referenda on major expenditure decisions should be examined;
- Alternation of the leaders of Suffolk and Norfolk as leaders of the combined authority should be considered.

The timing of the consultation during the holiday season means it will get limited response from the general public – only those with a close interest in local government are likely to be aware of it.

The whole scheme is dependent on a regional strategic view. Particularly in the fields of transport and housing where improvements are essential, that regional view may well succumb to other pressures from diverse local views from neighbours such as Essex and Cambridgeshire and from national planning.

Yours sincerely